

he founded one called "La Sylphide," in which, dressmakers and their creations, hairdressers and their restorers, corsets and cosmetics, in fact "beautifiers" of every description, were puffed in a skilful and amusing manner. "La Sylphide" did not make Villemessant a millionaire, but the money and the experience he acquired in conducting it launched him into a very successful career. In the days of Charles X. there had been a newspaper called "Le Figaro," which had died as many newspapers die. The title having lapsed, anybody could appropriate it, and Villemessant, finding it to his liking, did so. He started, then, a weekly journal called "Le Figaro," which at first was devoted largely to things theatrical, and in particular to the charms, the wit, and the merits of actresses, not forgetting those of the *demi-monde*.

The contents of "Le Figaro," in its early period, were often scurrilous; unpleasant stories were current respecting the means by which paragraphs of green-room gossip were inserted or suppressed; but Villemessant, paying no heed, went his way, prosperous and rejoicing. In course of time, like many another adventurer, he assumed some semblance of respectability, and imparted a literary touch to his journal. But, as its questionable days were still too recent for many

folk to take to it, he decided to start, or rather revive for a time, another derelict newspaper, "L'Événement," which he made a non-political morning daily.

Villemessant had a remarkable scent for *actualité* and talent. Almost every French writer popular from 1864 onward, contributed for a time to "L'Événement" or to "Le Figaro," which eventually took the other journal's place. Villemessant liked to capture his contributors young, when